

## Monthly Report – May 2022

### Smolt Tagging, Tracking and Survival

The end of May brought with it the end of the smolt run. Good numbers of fish were tagged this year with 3678 fish being captured and transported on the Meig, of which 2754 were PIT-tagged. 1715 smolts were successfully captured at the Achanalt wolf trap on the Bran and released downstream at Tor Achilty, just shy of 1000 of these fish were tagged. All fish, both tagged and non-tagged were split into two groups for the day vs night release trial. The results of which we hope we will begin to see as the adults ascend the dams this summer. The board hope that the delayed release of fish, allowing them to travel under the cover of darkness, will minimise predation and maximise the numbers of returning salmon.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> May the stop-logs were put into place at Achanalt, effectively closing the smolt trap. And the whole team worked together to uplift and disassemble the rotary screw traps at the Meig. The screw traps are due to be sent off to a fabrication specialist for upgrades to allow more efficient smolt capture during low spring flows, as well as some minor repairs which will be carried out in house.



### INNS

Unsettled and mostly wet weather for much of the month limited the ability of staff to make an early start to the treatment of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) within the catchment. Dry weather is required for application of herbicides due to the risk of run-off into water bodies. Nevertheless, we look forward to being joined by our full-time invasive species project officer on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June.

A number of American mink traps continue to be monitored throughout the catchment by a dedicated team of volunteers and ghillies. This work is essential to controlling numbers of this invasive species which can have a serious impact on water voles and ground nesting birds. Monthly bird surveys have continued to be undertaken on the mainstem of the river Conon to inform licencing of sawbill ducks.

### **Survey Work**

The board also undertook survey work on the upper Meig, working alongside Strathconon estate and a third-party hydro development office, to assess the suitability of several sites for a small hydro scheme. Habitat surveys, assessment of barriers to migration as well as updating archival records for some small upper catchment burns. From initial walkover surveys we plan to organise a formal survey of juvenile salmonid densities later in the summer, prior to any operations commencing.



### **Bailiffing Report**

Patrols targeting persons fishing illegally continued throughout May on the rivers and coastline within the district. These patrols were carried out at varying times including weekends. Two males in possession of spinning rods were removed for fishing without permission on the River Meig. One male received a warning for using a knotted mesh landing net. Their use was made illegal in 2007.